

What is claimed is:

1. A communication-means notification method for use in a communications system selectively employing communication means installed in information terminals on a network for
5 users to communicate with one another, the method:

(a) user-relationally storing communication means operable in users' information terminals;

(b) receiving a destination-user designation from a source user requesting communication;

10 (c) based on information stored in (a), generating a list describing communication means operable at both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal; and

(d) reporting the list to the source user before
15 communication begins.

2. A communication-means notification system for use in a communications system selectively employing communication means installed in information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another, the system
20 comprising:

a first table user-relationally storing communication means operable in users' information terminals;

an administration means for receiving operable communication means settings from users and storing the
25 settings in said first table;

a designation means for receiving destination-user designations from source users requesting communication;

an acquisition means for acquiring from said first table communication means operable at both source users' information terminals and destination users' information terminals;

a generation means for generating a list, based on information acquired by said acquisition means, describing communication means actually usable by both source users and destination users; and

a notification means for reporting the generated list to source users before communication begins.

3. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 2, further comprising:

a second table for storing relationally to users and predetermined user statuses communication means actually usable in the user statuses; and

a prioritizing means for receiving settings on the actually usable communication means in the predetermined user statuses and storing the settings in said second table; wherein

said first table together stores user status in addition to communication means, and

said administration means receives settings on new user status and writes actually usable communication

means in the new user status into said first table in accordance with said second table settings.

4. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 2, further comprising:

5 a second table for storing relationally to users and user statuses communication means actually usable in predetermined user statuses, and priority levels for the communication means; and

10 a prioritizing means for receiving settings on the actually usable communication means in the predetermined user statuses, and the priority level settings for the actually usable communication means, and storing the settings in said second table; wherein

15 said first table together stores communication means priority level and user status in addition to communication means,

20 said administration means receives settings on new user status and writes actually usable communication means in the new user status, and communication means priority level, into said first table in accordance with said second table settings,

 said acquisition means acquires from said first table communication means actually usable by both a source user's information terminal and a destination

user's information terminal and the priority level of the actually usable communication means, and

said generation means generates said list based on the priority level of the communication means actually usable by both the source user and the destination user.

5 5. The communication-means notification system set forth in 4, wherein said generation means rearranges communication means in accordance with source user priority level.

10 6. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 4, wherein said generation means rearranges communication means in accordance with destination user priority level.

15 7. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein said designation means receives designations using identification information designating operable communication means at destination users' information terminals.

20 8. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein

said designation means is enabled to receive a destination-user's designation according to identification information specifying operable communication means at destination users' information terminals; and

if a communication means corresponding to the identification information is usable by both a destination user and a source user, said generation means describes that communication means at the head of the list.

5 9. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein said designation means is enabled to receive a destination user's designation according to identification information specifying operable communication means at destination users' information terminals, further
10 comprising

a starting means for starting, if a communication means corresponding to the identification information is usable by both a destination user and a source user, communication according to that communication means.

15 10. The communication-means notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein said communication means is a game application wherein a plurality of users can participate on a network.

20 11. A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded a communication-means notification program for use in information terminals wherein communication means selectively employed by users for communicating with one another is installed, and for use in information terminals able to communicate with said information terminals; said
25 communication means notification program recorded on the

computer-readable recording medium for executing the following steps:

- 5 A. preparing a first table user-relationally storing communication means operable in users' information terminals;
- B. receiving operable communication means settings from users and storing the settings in said first table;
- C. receiving destination-user designations from source users requesting communication;
- 10 D. acquiring from said first table communication means operable at both source users' information terminals and destination users' information terminals;
- E. generating a list, based on information acquired by said acquisition means, describing communication
- 15 means actually usable by both source users and destination users; and
- F. reporting the generated list to source users before communication begins.

12. A communication-means notification method for use
20 in a communications system selectively employing communication means installed in information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another, the method:

- (a) user-relationally storing communication means operable
- 25 in users' information terminals;

- (b) receiving a destination-user designation from a source user requesting communication;
- (c) based on information stored in (a), generating a first list describing communication means operable at both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal;
- (d) generating a second list describing communication means present at either the destination or source user's information terminal and not at the other, and downloadable to the terminal not having the communication means present and executable on said terminal; and
- (e) reporting a third list composite of the first list and the second list to the source user before communication begins.

13. The communication-means notification method set forth in claim 12, wherein said second list includes a description of communication means not present on either the destination nor source user's information terminal, and downloadable to both terminals and executable on both terminals.

14. The communication-means notification method set forth in claim 12, wherein:

download conditions for downloading communication means to users' information terminals and execution conditions for

executing communication means on users' information terminals are stored in advance for each downloadable communication means; and

the second list is generated based on terminal
5 information and download conditions and execution conditions for users' information terminals.

15. The communication-means notification method set forth in claim 12, wherein:

selection of any of the communication means on the
10 third list is received from the source user and the selected communication means is reported to the destination user's information terminal; and

if the destination user's information terminal does not have the selected communication means, the destination
15 user's information terminal acquires the selected communication means by downloading.

16. A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded a program for executing the communication-means notification method set forth in the foregoing claims ~~12-15~~.

20 17. A communication-means notification system for use in a communications system selectively employing communication means installed in information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another, the system comprising:

a first table user-relationally storing communication means operable in users' information terminals;

a designation means for receiving destination-user designations from source users requesting communication;

5 a first generating means for generating a list, based on information stored in said first table, describing communication means operable on both destination users' information terminals and source users' information terminals;

10 a second generating means for generating a second list describing communication means present at either a destination or a source user's information terminal and not at the other, and downloadable to the terminal not having the communication means present and executable on said
15 terminal; and

a notification means for reporting a third list composite of the first list and the second list to the source user before communication begins.

18. A communication means supply device for use in the
20 communication-means notification system set forth in 17, including:

a creation means for creating a downloadable-executable list of communication means downloadable to information terminals and executable on the information terminals for
25 destination users and source users respectively; and

a supply means for supplying communication means included in the downloadable-executable list to user information terminals.

19. A communication-means notification method for use
5 in a communications system selectively employing communication means installed in information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another, the method:

- 10 (a) user-relationally storing communication means operable on users' single or plural information terminals and terminal identification information for identifying users' information terminals;
- (b) receiving a destination-user designation from a source user requesting communication;
- 15 (c) based on information stored in (a), generating a list describing communication means operable at both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal; and
- (d) wherein a plurality of the same communication
20 means is included in said list, adding to said list further information for distinguishing the information terminals, and reporting said list to the source user before communication begins.

20. The communication-means notification method set
25 forth in 19, wherein:

a user-set messages with respect to communication means on information terminals are stored together with the communication means and information terminals; and

a destination-user-set message is further included in
5 the list reported to the source user.

21. The communication-means notification method set forth in 19, wherein:

the communication means operable at the same user's single information terminal or plurality of information
10 terminals are grouped by predetermined criteria;

said list is generated based on the grouped communication means; and

the communication means described in said list are grouped by the predetermined criteria, and reported to the
15 source user before communication begins.

22. The communication-means notification method set forth in 21, wherein by-group priority rankings are established for the communication means, and said list is created based on the priority rankings.

20 23. The communication-means notification method set forth in 22, wherein said priority rankings are established based on sequence made by usability within the groups.

24. The communication-means notification method set forth in 22, wherein:

a recommended communication means is established for each source user in each communication means group; and

said list is generated by modifying the communication means priority rankings for each source.

5 25. The communication-means notification method set forth in 21, wherein selection of any group based on said list is received from the source user, and an attempt is made to communicate with the destination user's communication means included in the selected group.

10 26. The communication-means notification method set forth in 21, wherein:

selection of any group based on said list is received from the source user;

15 inquiry is made to the destination user's communication means included in the selected group as to whether it is receiving or not; and

communication begins with the communication means first to respond in the destination user's information terminal.

20 27. A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded a program for executing the communication-means notification methods set forth in any of the foregoing claims ~~19-26~~.

25 28. A communication-means notification system for use in a communications system selectively employing communication means installed in information terminals on a

network for users to communicate with one another, the system comprising:

a first table for user-relationally storing
communication means operable on users' single or plural
5 information terminals and terminal identification
information for identifying users' information terminals;

designation means for receiving a destination-user
designation from a source user requesting communication;

generating means for generating a list based on
10 information stored in said first table, describing
communication means operable at both the destination user's
information terminal and the source user's information
terminal; and

notification means for adding to said list, wherein a
15 plurality of the same communication means is included in
said list, further information for distinguishing the
information terminals, and for reporting said list to the
source user before communication begins.